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#LifespanLTC

Lantern Theater Company Presents Philadelphia Premiere of *THE LIFESPAN OF A FACT* by Jeremy Kareken, David Murrell, and Gordon Farrell, Directed by Matt Pfeiffer, February 2 – March 5, 2023

PHILADELPHIA (January 12, 2023) – **Lantern Theater Company** continues its 2022/23 season with the Philadelphia premiere of *The Lifespan of a Fact* by writers **Jeremy Kareken, David Murrell, and Gordon Farrell**. Award-winning director and actor **Matt Pfeiffer** returns to the Lantern, directing a cast that includes **Ian Merrill Peakes, Trevor William Fayle, and Joanna Liao**. *The Lifespan of a Fact* runs **Thursday, February 2 through Sunday, March 5, 2023**, at St. Stephen's Theater, the Lantern's resident venue; a complete schedule of performances and audience enrichment events is included in the fact sheet below. Theater critics and members of the press are invited to request press tickets for **opening night on Wednesday, February 8 at 7 p.m.** by contacting Anne Shuff at ashuff@lanterntheater.org. To ensure a safe and comfortable theater experience, everyone other than the actors on stage must wear **properly fitted masks** while attending *The Lifespan of a Fact*.

Hailed as “terrifically engaging,” “ingenious,” and “invigorating and unsettling,” by *The New York Times*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, and *Vulture*, respectively, *The Lifespan of a Fact* pits a famous writer, a magazine editor, and a lowly fact checker against one another in an epic battle over the meaning of words, truth, and art. Based on the 2012 book by John D’Agata and Jim Fingal – the real-life writer and fact checker – this comedy explores meaningful questions about art versus truth and when art is more ‘truthful’ than facts.

The Lifespan of a Fact is a play, based on a book, based on an essay. In 2003, *Harper’s Magazine* commissioned John D’Agata to write an essay on the suicide of Las Vegas teen Levi Presley. The final product, titled “What Happens There,” was based on D’Agata’s experience researching the event and creatively explored the culture of tourism and suicide in Las Vegas. *Harper’s* pulled the essay from publication due to factual

inaccuracies; after seven years of fact-checking by Jim Fingal, it was published in *The Believer* on January 1, 2010. D’Agata and Fingal collaborated to write *The Lifespan of a Fact* – the book – which was published by W.W. Norton & Company in 2012. The book combines the essay itself with Fingal’s extensive and meticulous fact-checking notes in a fascinating debate on fact versus fiction and which is more valuable in the search for truth.

The Lifespan of a Fact – the play adapted by Jeremy Kareken, David Murrell, and Gordon Farrell – opened on Broadway in 2018 starring Bobby Cannavale as D’Agata, Daniel Radcliffe as Fingal, and Cherry Jones as Emily Penrose, the fictional magazine editor caught between them. *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote of the play, “Ingenious... stinging relevance to so much of what’s been happening for years now in American social, cultural, and political discourse.”

“I love this play,” said **Matt Pfeiffer**, who directs the Lantern’s production. “It’s a fantastic debate about what is the essential nature of truth. At this moment in time, we have an incredibly fraught relationship with facts. The play grapples and wrestles with how we perceive facts within a narrative. And since all of theater is essentially a fictional trick of artistry, I can think of no better place to tell the story. The Lantern has a great history of producing ethically complex plays that provoke and entertain in equal measure. I think this play fits perfectly in that cannon and the production will be a terrifically entertaining evening of theater.”

Lantern Theater Company will delve deeper into the themes raised by *The Lifespan of a Fact* on its **Lantern Searchlight blog**, available online at lanterntheater.org/searchlight. Articles will be published throughout the production’s run, exploring the role of fact checkers, the state of modern-day media, and a study of truth vs. facts, as well as behind the scenes interviews with the artists.

Tickets for *The Lifespan of a Fact* are \$25 – \$42 and are available online at www.lanterntheater.org or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Discounts are available for students, seniors 65 and up, U.S. military personnel, and groups of 10 or more. Performances of *The Lifespan of a Fact* will take place at **St. Stephen’s Theater**, located at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia. During the 2022/23 season, the Lantern will announce updated health and safety guidelines 30 days prior to the start of each production. For *The Lifespan of a Fact*, everyone other than the actors on stage must wear **properly fitted masks** at all times in all parts of the Lantern venue, including the performance space, lobby, restrooms, and stairwells. More information is available at lanterntheater.org/health-and-safety.

About the Lantern Artists

Philadelphia-based actor and director **Matt Pfeiffer** returns to the Lantern to direct *The Lifespan of a Fact*. His previous Lantern directing credits include *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (2015), the Philadelphia premiere of

Athol Fugard's *The Train Driver* (2014), and the world premiere of Anthony Lawton's *The Fooocy* (2006). He has also directed productions at theaters across the region, including Arden Theatre Company, People's Light, Walnut Street Theatre, 1812 Productions, Delaware Theatre Company, Bristol Riverside Theatre, InterAct Theatre Company, and the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, among others. He is a twelve-time Barrymore Award nominee, winning twice for directing *The Whale* and *The Invisible Hand* at Theatre Exile, where he is a resident artist. He is the 2008 recipient of the F. Otto Haas Award and a graduate of DeSales University.

Ian Merrill Peakes takes on the role of writer John D'Agata. He previously appeared as Frank in the Lantern's spring 2020 digital production of *Molly Sweeney* and as Dutch military captain Joseph Pillel in the Lantern's critically acclaimed 2017 world premiere of *The Craftsman* by Bruce Graham. A Barrymore and Helen Hayes award-winning actor, Peakes' stage credits also include productions with Walnut Street Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, Theatre Exile, Philadelphia Theatre Company, The Wilma Theater, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and many others.

Joining Peakes will be **Trevor William Fayle** as fact checker Jim Fingal (sixth Lantern production, including *Othello*, *Hapgood*, *Photograph 51*, *Arcadia*, and *Emma*) and **Joanna Liao** as editor Emily Penrose (sixth Lantern production, including *The Last Match*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *36 Views*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The School for Wives*).

The creative team includes scenic designer **Dirk Durossette** (Lantern credits include *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine*; *Measure for Measure*; and many others), costume designer **Kelly Myers** (*A Man for All Seasons*, *The Last Match*), lighting designer **Amanda Jensen** (*The Last Match*, *The Heir Apparent*), sound designer **Chris Sannino** (Lantern debut), projection designer **Michael Long** (*Coriolanus*), stage manager **Rebecca Smith**, and assistant director **Patrick Reilly**.

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994 and continuing its 29th season with *The Lifespan of a Fact* by Jeremy Kareken, David Murrell, and Gordon Farrell, Lantern Theater Company's mission is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. The Lantern serves the Greater Philadelphia region with award-winning productions and education programming, notably partnering with middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District to provide in-classroom residencies in support of curricular learning. The Lantern became a national leader in streaming theater during the Covid-19 health crisis, producing ten fully designed plays that were created and filmed in the company's resident home at St. Stephen's Theater, garnering coverage in national media including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and reaching more than 30,000 patrons in 15 countries and all 50 states. Following *The Lifespan of a Fact*, the

Lantern's 2022/23 season will conclude with *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare, directed by Charles McMahon (**Press Opening: Wednesday, May 24, 2023, at 7 p.m.**). More information is available online at [**www.lanterntheater.org**](http://www.lanterntheater.org).

Lantern Theater Company – 2022/23 Season
FACT SHEET
The Lifespan of a Fact

WRITTEN BY:

Jeremy Kareken & David Murrell and Gordon Farrell
Based on the book by John D'Agata and Jim Fingal

DIRECTED BY:

Matt Pfeiffer

CAST:

Trevor William Fayle as Jim Fingal
Joanna Liao as Emily Penrose
Ian Merrill Peakes as John D'Agata

CREATIVE TEAM:

Dirk Durossette, Scenic Designer
Kelly Myers, Costume Designer
Amanda Jensen, Lighting Designer
Chris Sannino, Sound Designer
Michael Long, Projection Designer
Patrick Reilly, Assistant Director

PRESS INFORMATION:

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TICKET INFORMATION:

Online: www.lanterntheater.org
By Phone: (215) 829-0395

TICKET PRICING:

\$25 – \$42

PERFORMANCES:

Thursday, February 2 – Sunday, March 5, 2023

PREVIEWS:

Thursday, February 2 at 7 p.m.
Friday, February 3 at 8 p.m.
Saturday, February 4 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, February 5 at 2 p.m.
Tuesday, February 7 at 6:30 p.m.

OPENING NIGHT:

Wednesday, February 8 at 7 p.m.

REGULAR RUN:

Wednesday at 2 p.m. on February 15 [AIC], February 22 [AIC], and March 1
Wednesday at 7 p.m. on February 15, February 22, and March 1
Thursday at 7 p.m. on February 9, February 16, February 23, and December March 2

Friday at 8 p.m. on February 10, February 17, February 24, and March 3
Saturday at 2 p.m. on February 11, February 18, February 25, and March 4
Saturday at 8 p.m. on February 11, February 18, February 25, and March 4
Sunday at 2 p.m. on February 12 [AIC], February 19 [AIC], February 26, and March 5

CLOSING PERFORMANCE:

Sunday, March 5 at 2 p.m.

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION [AIC]

Moderated post-show discussions with the cast immediately follow 2 p.m. performances on Sunday, February 12; Wednesday, February 15; Sunday, February 19; and Wednesday, February 22. Lantern dramaturg **Meghan Winch** will lead the discussions.

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

The Lifespan of a Fact pits a famous writer, a magazine editor, and a lowly fact checker against one another in an epic battle over the meaning of words, truth, and art. Based on the book by John D'Agata and Jim Fingal – the real-life writer and fact checker – this comedy explores meaningful questions about truth vs. art and when art is more ‘truthful’ than facts.

PERFORMANCE VENUE:

St. Stephen's Theater at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia

COVID-19 HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS:

To ensure the continued safety of our artists, staff, and patrons, everyone other than the actors on stage must wear properly fitted masks at all times in all parts of the Lantern's venue. More detailed information is available at lanterntheater.org/health-and-safety.